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LITERARY INFLUENCES IN COLONIAL NEWSPAPERS, 1704-1750. By Elizabeth Christine Cook, Ph. D. Pp. xi + 279. New York: Columbia University Press, 1912.

Dr. Cook's monograph continues the well-known series of "Studies in English and Comparative Literature" from Columbia University. Her work was done under the special direction of Professor William P. Trent, whose guiding hand is evident on many of its pages. However, the research involved could not have been completed at any one institution or in one city. The author has labored long and profitably over rare newspaper files in Boston, Philadelphia, Charleston, and other cities, obtaining thereby a wider knowledge of the entire subject than is ordinarily met with. As a result her work not only gains in authority, but is full of human interest in that it touches what is largely a virgin field. The limitations of the study can in no wise be attributed to narrowness of vision, but rather to lack of intensity. It will probably suggest more questions than it answers, and as pioneer work many of the conclusions reached on minor matters cannot be regarded as final.

Proceeding on the justifiable assumption that men of letters did not exist in the American colonies during the first half of the eighteenth century, and that such literature as was produced by ecclesiastics or by practical men of affairs has already been examined by the historians, Dr. Cook has delved into a new channel for marks of literary influence. In a few colonial centers, such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Annapolis, Williamsburg, and Charleston, were published, particularly in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, certain small, ill-printed weekly newspapers whose contents were often of more than ephemeral interest. The very fact that these journals faced extreme difficulty in gathering colonial or foreign news until the matter was months old, practically forced the editors to provide their readers with other forms of literary entertainment. Some of them reprinted articles from English encyclopædias, others contained moral instruction in one form or another, but many of them fell into the habit of presenting anew essays and poems by Addison, Steele, Pope, and Swift; whole plays were sometimes reprinted; Latin verses were translated not infrequently; and then more versatile geniuses fell to imitating the work of Addison and Pope in brief essays or verses particularly adapted to local situations. To describe typical literary efforts and to analyze typical literary influences in these newspapers, is the task set for herself by Miss Cook.

Restoration would have produced a comedy not much different from the actual product, even had Molière never lived."

Gillet, p. 17: "Ensuite, la tradition littéraire s'était moins bien conservée à la Cour que dans le peuple."

Ibid., p. 136: "Je crois que tels critiques, qui attribuent à Fletcher et à Shirley le mérite d'avoir rendu possible la transition du théâtre élizabéthain à celui de la Restauration, se trompent grossièrement."

The bare story of the newspapers' struggles for existence is no dull tale. Benjamin Franklin and his brother, as might be expected, play a large part in this act; but realizing that Franklin's essays have already been studied in detail, Dr. Cook passes over them lightly to show that Franklin's zeal for Addison was shared by his contemporaries, and that in both matter and form his imitations of *The Spectator* closely resemble similar essays found in other colonial newspapers. Even in combining the offices of postmaster and printer, Franklin was but following precedent. John Campbell, proprietor of *The Boston News-Letter* from 1704 on, was postmaster and bookseller; and as soon as he gave up the postoffice to William Brooker, the latter set up a rival journal, *The Boston Gazette*, printed by James Franklin. After forty numbers the *Gazette* passed into the hands of a new postmaster, James Musgrave, who would not employ Franklin to print it. Then it was that the elder Franklin began publishing *The New England Courant*, whose staff soon earned the distinctive appellation of "The Hell-Fire Club."

This name, of course, was due to Franklin's somewhat unorthodox views on religious subjects, and the irreverent attitude assumed by him toward conservative ecclesiastical leaders. The next newspaper to be founded, *The New England Weekly Journal*, beginning in 1727, was in a sense the organ of this ecclesiastical party, attracting to it such men as Mather Byles and Thomas Prince, both of them Harvard graduates and pronounced theologians. Meanwhile Benjamin Franklin had journeyed to Philadelphia, where in 1729 he began contributing to Andrew Bradford's *American Mercury* a series of essays entitled, "The Busy-Body," and modeled after *The Spectator*. Shortly afterwards he purchased a competing journal, rechristened it *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, and made it a bitter rival of *The Mercury*. A similar competition went on in New York between William Bradford's *New York Gazette* and John Peter Zenger's more democratic *New York Weekly Journal*, the editor of which was finally tried for libel and triumphantly acquitted. William Parks, of whom little is known, founded in 1727 *The Maryland Gazette*, and later *The Virginia Gazette*, while a partner of Benjamin Franklin established *The South Carolina Gazette* in 1732.

But in the history of the making and the unmaking of newspapers Dr. Cook is not primarily interested. What she brings out in each case is the prevailing admiration for Addison and Steele, and the constant citation of their names as sufficient to put an end to all further controversy; the excuses offered for reprinting whole numbers of *The Spectator*, *The Tattler*, or *The Guardian*; the similar acknowledgment of Pope and Gay's authority in verse-making, with close imitations of all these authors as occasion serves. To one who imagines that contemporary English literature had little influence on the early colonists, it is disconcerting to find so universal a custom of begging "leave to publish my Dislike of [calumny]

in the words of that great and good man, Mr. Addison." This is not all. Advertisements from these newspapers show frequent performances of Addison's *Cato*, and plays by Congreve, Farquhar, and Lillo, at least, in the theatres of Williamsburg and Charleston. Other advertisements throw light on the reading of these early Americans. Books of devotion are somewhat more prominent than secular volumes, but the works of Locke, Milton, Dryden, Voltaire, Pope, Gay, Addison, and Steele abound.

To the least known of all these newspapers, *The South Carolina Gazette*, one may pardonably devote special attention. Of this journal from its foundation in 1732 to its death in 1801, the Charleston Library Society possesses a practically unbroken file; but because few copies are found in the larger American libraries, the periodical has never been adequately examined. Dr. Cook's concluding chapter of some thirty-five pages is given over to this subject, showing the *Gazette's* inheritance from Franklin at its very foundation; its continuous reprinting of *The Spectator*, and constant imitation of Addison in essays and letters, even to an account of the "Meddlers' Club," to which Sir Roger might have belonged; some gentle satire on the local custom, existing to the present day, of strolling on "the Bay" or "the Battery" in the evening; numerous notices of Charleston play-houses and early performances therein; advertisements of the booksellers; and finally some illuminating comment on the essays and poems written for and against the Reverend George Whitefield.

In discussing Charleston theatres Dr. Cook falls into several more or less serious errors due to the absence of sufficient perspective. For example, on pp. 244-245, runs the sentence: "Charleston had its theatrical season as a matter of course, and plays were given in two theaters, the Dock Street Theater and the Queen Street Theater, as well as occasionally in the Court Room." Now a closer examination of these notices would have shown that the Court Room performances noted—five, altogether—occur during the months of January, February, and March, 1734-5; that a prologue from which Dr. Cook quotes at length, belongs to the first play recorded in Charleston and so intimates; that only twice—both times in connection with this play on February 12, 1735-6—is the "New Theater in Dock Street" mentioned, while immediately and ever afterwards we find advertised "the New Theater in Queen Street"; and finally examination of other local records would have quickly proved that Dock Street and Queen Street are one and the same. That is to say, the earliest recorded plays were acted in "the Court Room" for a few weeks during the winter of 1734-5; the very next year a permanent theater was built on Queen Street, and there all the other performances took place.

Again Dr. Cook, quoting from an "occasional epilogue" certain words concerning "pale Ghosts arising slow", infers, p. 247, that *Hamlet* was then "often acted in Charleston." If so, it antedates the

first known American performance of a Shakespearian play by at least fifteen years. Careful study of these lines will convince even Dr. Cook that the poet intends them for prophecy, not history, and prophecy distinctly conditioned on what "haply your continu'd smiles produce."¹ A more positive error occurs on p. 248, where Miss Cook states, "Only the last performance of *The London Merchant* is announced in the *Gazette*," and then quotes an advertisement from the issue of March 13, 1735-6. But in the *Gazette* for March 6, 1735-6 is advertised an earlier performance of *The London Merchant* for "TUESDAY next," i. e., March 9. One more mistake, and that a slight one, occurs in the list of books copied on p. 252 from an advertisement, where not only Bradley's *Botanical Dictionary* but also a "*Dictionaricum Botanical* 2 V.," should have been included. Each one of these slips may be set down to the wide extent of the acreage which Dr. Cook has attempted to plough, and probably, also, to shortened hours of labor in Charleston. The want of complete accuracy, however, is an invitation to other scholars to try the tillage in the same borders.

The volume is written in a clear, easy style, is provided with a full index and bibliographies, and bears evidence of much careful scholarship. Its general conclusions are established beyond cavil.

ROBERT ADGER LAW.

University of Texas.

¹ For further discussion of this and similar points see *The Nation* (New York), Vol. xcvi, pp. 463-464 (April 23, 1914); and Vol. xcix, pp. 278-279 (September 3, 1914).